

January 4, 2013

To: Whatcom County Council, Washington State Environmental Protection Agency, and  
US Army Corps of Engineers

Re: EIS Gateway Pacific Coal Terminal at Cherry Point, Washington

Impact: Ocean Acidification

My name is Sally Stapp. I live in Everett, Washington and spend much of my time on Guemes Island in Skagit County. I grew up with local fisherman Pete Knutson who spoke recently at the Seattle Scoping Hearing. Pete & his family are among the 15,000 people employed in the Seattle-based fishing industry.

I would like to reiterate his concerns about increased mining, transporting, storage, shipping and burning of 48 - 54 million additional tons of coal and the impact this GPT proposal will have on the acidification of the world's oceans.

In his two minute scoping comments he said, "About 30% of the carbon dioxide generated from fossil fuel burning is absorbed by the earth's oceans, which then become more acidic. We are already seeing the impacts to shellfish in Puget Sound, impacts now recognized in the scientific literature, impacts now being studied by NOAA."

Pete continues, "North Pacific salmon eat huge quantities of a microscopic floating mollusk called a pteropod, also know as a "sea butterfly". It has a shell that is vulnerable to ocean acidification. If we lose the pteropod, we endanger the salmon which feed orca, bear, cedar, human and the whole living web of the north Pacific Rim."

The Union of Concerned Scientists, in their recent publication – Cooler Smarter: Practical Steps for Low-Carbon Living - support Pete's assertion. They present data collected hourly at the Mauna Loa Observatory in Hawaii beginning in 1958 that show a continuous, nearly linear increase in atmospheric Carbon Dioxide - the Keeling Curve, Figure 3.2 on p. 34. "As part of the carbon cycle, the world's oceans have long absorbed roughly one-third of all the carbon dioxide emitted by human activity..." (p. 42). "In fact, current measurements indicate the Earth's oceans are already about 30% more acidic than they were before the Industrial Revolution. As the world's oceans absorb more carbon dioxide, they become more acidic, threatening the ocean's reefs and some of the plankton that form the base of the aquatic food chain" (p. 43).

Please study the significant, negative, cumulative impact the burning of coal and all fossil fuels has on ocean acidification in our local, state, national and worldwide oceans and all other water systems.

Additionally, please study the impact on our local, state, national and worldwide fisheries caused by mining, transporting, storing, shipping and burning fossil fuels – including sub-bituminous coal from the Powder River Basin, Wyoming.

If a spill were to occur at any of the above stages, please study the exacerbation of the impacts listed above. Thank you.